



## HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

### Statement of Subcommittee Chairwoman Martha McSally (R-AZ) Border and Maritime Security Subcommittee

*"Hidden in Plain Sight: Understanding Federal Efforts to Stop Human Trafficking"*  
September 26, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

Human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar industry that enslaves approximately 25 million men, women, and children worldwide through sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced labor.

It is important to understand that there is "no one face" of human trafficking.

The truth is that traffickers do not discriminate when it comes to their victims. Victims can come from any background or be of any age, like a teenage girl who ran away from home, only to be beaten, drugged, and forced to walk the streets. The migrant worker, who paid a smuggler to help him cross the border, only to be forced into manual labor. Or an elderly woman, lured by the promise of work in America, and forced to spend endless hours cleaning the mansion of her captors.

These examples are all too common.

To many Americans, human trafficking may seem like a problem happening far away from home. Sadly, that is not the case.

During a human trafficking roundtable I led back in 2015, we heard from sex trafficking survivor Beth Jacobs. She explained to us just how easy it was to fall victim to sex trafficking. She was drugged at a party at age 16, then kidnapped and forced into prostitution. Over the course of six years, she was subjected to rapes, beatings, and forced commercial sex acts. And just last year, the Human Trafficking Institute reported that there were 783 active human trafficking cases in the U.S. federal court system, involving thousands of victims. Even more alarming, is the fact that more than 55 percent of those cases involved sex trafficking of children.

Yet, as these horrific cases are uncovered in communities across the United States, many people are still surprised on how close to home they actually are.

Earlier this month, twenty-four people were arrested in a human trafficking sting in the Phoenix-area of my home state of Arizona. Some of the defendants, ranging in age from 21 to 80 years old, are facing serious charges including aggravated luring, child sex trafficking, and money laundering.

Let me be very clear, human trafficking is happening right here in our backyards, and the victims of this tragic crime are often hidden in plain sight.

I called this hearing today to shine a light on the heinous crime of human trafficking, and highlight the work being done by our federal agencies who partner with state, local, and tribal governments and law enforcement agencies to eradicate human trafficking from our streets, our local business, and our neighborhoods.

I am proud of the steps that the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and their interagency task force partners are taking to combat all forms of human trafficking.

At the Federal level, the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center serves as a clearinghouse for intelligence related to human trafficking. Representatives from DHS, DOJ, and the State Department sit side by side providing law enforcement partners with timely information on human trafficking trends, and pushing out actionable case intelligence to jumpstart and bolster ongoing criminal investigations.

Homeland Security Investigations (or HSI), within ICE, leads the Department of Homeland Security's effort on human trafficking investigations, and has accounted for 1,932 criminal arrests and 812 convictions in human trafficking cases in 2017 alone.

The DHS Blue Campaign, which was formally authorized in February of this year – thanks to the leadership of Chairman McCaul – is a unified effort by the Department to conduct outreach to enhance awareness of trafficking and provide training and materials to those in the best position to identify trafficking victims.

The Blue Campaign works in collaboration with law enforcement, NGO, and the private sector stakeholders to identify victims, and trains organizations of indicators to look out for.

The Department of Justice plays a vital role in combating human trafficking by prosecuting those involved to the fullest extent of the law.

Under the leadership of the Department of Justice, and in partnership with DHS, and the State Department, the U.S. Government works closely with our Mexican counterparts to develop high-impact bilateral trafficking investigations.

These multifaceted prosecutions are aimed at dismantling international human trafficking networks that operate across the U.S.-Mexico border and are conducted through the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Human Trafficking Enforcement Initiative.

Congress has made it a priority to pass legislation that would enable law enforcement, prosecutors, and other stakeholders to fight human trafficking. To name a few, over the last few years we have reallocated existing grants for human trafficking deterrence and victims' support; made it a federal crime to knowingly advertise for the commercial sex exploitation of minors and trafficking victims; enhanced the ability of healthcare professionals to identify victims; and provided the financial industry more tools to detect and deter money laundering attached to human trafficking.

Criminals engaged in human trafficking range from amateur family-run organizations to sophisticated transnational organized crime syndicates.

It's critical that we prosecute human trafficking offenders who victimize vulnerable populations. We must support efforts to raise awareness and educate those who work in law enforcement, at ports of entry, in health care, in child protective services, and elsewhere to identify trafficking. We must also ensure that victims receive the care they need after they've been rescued.

This is a complex, and multifaceted problem. There are no quick or easy solutions, but I take comfort in knowing that the brave men and women within the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice are tracking these criminals down, and saving these victims.

I look forward to hearing from our Federal and tribal witnesses on their experiences in combating human trafficking.

It is my hope that with the help of your testimony, we will raise awareness of this issue and identify solutions that will have an impact on human trafficking throughout the nation.

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